

## ACTIVITY #1: BOTTLE CAP CASTANETS

### OVERVIEW

Make your very own castanets out of bottle caps! Just like percussion instruments in a symphony, castanets vibrate when they are struck, producing a sound that can help form the rhythm of a piece of music.

### MATERIALS

- Four metal bottle caps
- Small piece of cardboard
- Glue
- Your favorite art supplies

### BACKGROUND INFO

Percussion instruments produce sound when they are hit or struck. Some percussion instruments are hit together, like the cymbals. Others have a special tool, such as a mallet or stick, that is used to hit the instrument. Percussion instruments help keep the rhythm, make special sounds, and add excitement and color to the orchestra.

There are two types of percussion instruments: *pitched* and *unpitched*. Pitched instruments, like the xylophone, can play separate, distinct pitches, and are often used to play the melody. Unpitched instruments, such as the snare drum, cannot produce different pitches and usually don't play the melody. Instead, their function is more rhythmic.

Think about the musicians you saw in the **Drumming, Humming, and Thrumming** video. Which instruments are pitched and which are unpitched?

You can make your own version of a percussion instrument with simple materials right at home! Castanets work a bit like cymbals: instead of using a mallet or stick, castanets produce sound when they are hit against each other. Try making two sets and see what percussion rhythms you can come up with!

## INSTRUCTIONS

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Check out the **Drumming, Humming, and Thrumming** video for a visual tutorial. Or, follow these steps:

1. First, cut two cardboard strips to be the base of your castanets. Each strip should be about 5 inches long and 1 ½ inches wide. Fold each strip in half, and decorate them if you like.
2. Now, add bottle caps to the inside of your folded cardboard. These are the percussive parts of the castanets and they need to be able to hit each other, so make sure your bottle caps are aligned well. Glue them onto the inside of your cardboard strips with the jagged, open side down. Let them dry thoroughly.
3. Now you're ready to play! Hold one set of castanets in each hand, between your thumb and forefinger. Practice clacking your bottle caps together and listen to the sound. Can you make the sound softer or louder? What else can you do to change the type of sound your castanets make?

## EXTENSIONS

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- Practice creating different rhythm patterns with your castanets. Can you create a pattern that uses both hands? Now try to make a rhythm that goes along with your favorite song. What about a pattern that reminds you of something in nature?
- Try making another set of castanets, but this time use a material other than metal bottle caps. Be creative—try using plastic bottle caps, another type of metal, rubber, or even small rocks. What does this new material sound like? Try creating some different rhythm patterns for your new castanets and see which type is your favorite!